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PAGE 01 STATE 063367

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EXDIS TOSEC 829

FOLLOWING REPEAT SAIGON 3226 SENT ACTION SECSTATE INFO SECDEF

CINCPAC USSAG USDEL JEC PARIS BIEN HOA CAN THOS DANANG

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QUOTE:

S E C R E T SAIGON 3226

EXDIS - MILITARY ADDRESSEES HANDLE AS SPECAT EXCLUSIVE

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WARNING--SENSITIVE INTELLIGENCE SOURCES AND METHODS
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E.O. 11652: XGDS -2. DECLASSIFICATION DATE IMPOSSIBLE TO
DETERMINE

TAGS: MOPS, VS

SUBJECT: HIGHLIGHTS OF NVA OFFENSIVE--SUMMARY FOR PERIOD ENDING
NOON MARCH 20.

1. GENERAL:

THE SCENE OF THE MOST SERIOUS MILITARY ACTION SHIFTED TO MR-1
IN THE PAST 24 HOURS WHEN AN NVA TANK ATTACK WAS LAUNCHED ACROSS

SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 02 STATE 063367

THE QUANG TRI CEASEFIRE LINE MARCH 19. ALTHOUGH INITIAL RF/PF

RESISTANCE DISSOLVED QUICKLY, THE SITUATION WAS SUBSEQUENTLY STABILIZED BY MOVEMENT OF A MARINE BATTALION INTO BLOCKING POSITION. IN MR-3, GVN FORCES HAVE LOST DINH QUAN, THE SIGNAL FACILITY ON CHUA CHAN MOUNTAIN OVERLOOKING GIA RAY, AND HAVE BEEN DRIVEN TO THE EDGE OF HOAI DUC. ROUTES 20 AND 1 REMAIN CLOSED, BUT TRAFFIC IS STILL TRAVELING ON ROUTE 22 TO TAY NINH.

IN MR-2, COMMUNIST SHELLINGS AND GROUND PROBES CONTINUED THROUGHOUT THE REGION. THE TROOP/CIVILIAN CONVOY FROM KONTUM/PLEIKU HAS BEGUN TO CROSS THE SONG CON RIVER. A HIGH PERCENTAGE OF THE 23D DIVISION IS NO LONGER COMBAT EFFECTIVE, BUT MANY UNITS HAVE JOINED UP WITH TERRITORIAL FORCES IN THE AREA.

2. MR-1.

THE LEVEL OF MILITARY ACTION IN MR-1, WHILE MODERATE IN INTENSITY, HAS TAKEN ON AN INCREASINGLY SERIOUS CHARACTER IN THE PAST 24 HOURS. AN NVA TANK ATTACK WAS LAUNCHED ACROSS THE QUANG TRI CEASEFIRE LINE MARCH 19, AND HAD PENETRATED TO WITHIN 39 KM OF HUE BY 1600 THAT DAY. MOVEMENT OF A MARINE BATTALION SUBSEQUENTLY STABILIZED THE SITUATION. FOURTEEN WERE KILLED AND 22 INJURED IN TWO SHELLINGS DIRECTED AT HUE. AS OF 1800 HOURS MARCH 19 QUANG TRI PROVINCE COULD BE REGARDED AS IN ENEMY HANDS. TERRITORIAL FORCES THERE BEGAN TO DISPERSE TOWARD HUE AS SOON AS WORD OF THE NVA ATTACK WAS RECEIVED. THE NUMBER OF REFUGEES NOW IN DA NANG IS ESTIMATED AT 200,000. ALL AMERICANS IN HUE HAVE MOVED TO DANANG. SOUTH OF THE HAI VAN PASS THE SITUATION REMAINS THE SAME, WITH CONTINUING COMMUNIST PRESSURE IN QUANG TIN AND QUANG NGAI.

3. MR-3.

THE GVN LOST CONTROL OF SEVERAL POINTS IN EASTERN MR-3. SHOWING THAT THE NVA DOES NOT LACK AMMUNITION, SOME OF THE HEAVIEST ABFS OF THE WAR FINALLY DROVE GVN DEFENDERS FROM DINH QUAN AND FORCED THE DEFENDERS OF HOAI DUC TO WITHDRAW OUTSIDE THE TOWN TO CONTINUE THEIR DEFENSE. ONE THOUSAND ROUNDS FELL AT DINH QUAN AND 2,000 AT HOAI DUC. THE GVN SIGNAL FACILITY ATOP CHUA CHAN MOUNTAIN OVERLOOKING GIA RAY WAS LOST, AND ROUTES 1 AND 20 REMAIN INTERDICTED. IN TAY NINH A GVN MULTI-BATTALION SWEEP SOUTHEAST OF TAY NINH CITY RESULTED IN 11 NVA KILLED WITH 6 KILLED AND 20 WOUNDED ON THE GVN SIDE. GENERAL TOAN HAS ORDERED THE EVACUATION OF ARVN

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PAGE 03 STATE 063367

FORCES AND EQUIPMENT FROM AN LOC, AND THAT OPERATION IS GOING SMOOTHLY. ROCKETS FELL WITHOUT DAMAGE ON BIEN HOA AIR BASE MARCH 20.

4. MR-2.

COMMUNIST SHELLINGS AND GROUND PROBES CONTINUE THROUGHOUT MR-2. THE TROOP AND CIVILIAN CONVOY FROM PLEIKU/KONTUM HAS STARTED TO CROSS THE SONG CON RIVER. THE COLUMN HAS RUN INTO SOME

COMMUNIST HARASSMENT AFTER CROSSING THE RIVER. VNAF MISSIONS HAVE BEEN DIRECTED AT FORMER GVN INSTALLATIONS IN PLEIKU, AND PILOTS REPORT THAT THEY HAVE DESTROYED THE RADAR SITES AT PLEIKU AIR BASE AND THAT THE RUNWAY IS 70 PER CENT DESTROYED. MOST OF THE 23D DIVISION IS NOW COMBAT INEFFECTIVE. ALL ORGANIC ELEMENTS OF THE DIVISION ARE ATTEMPTING TO FILTER AWAY FROM THE DARLAC BATTLE-FIELD, AND THE SPECIALIZED COMPANIES (E.G., SIGNAL AND TRANSPORT) ARE CONSIDERED LOST. HOWEVER, MANY OF THE DIVISION ELEMENTS HAVE JOINED UP WITH TERRITORIAL FORCES AND MAY BE ABLE TO ASSIST THE AIRBORNE BRIGADE AND ELEMENTS OF THE 40TH REGIMENT OF THE 22D DIVISION IN UTILIZING THE DAO CAO PASS AS A FALL-BACK DEFENSIVE POSITION. THE EVENTS IN MR-2 HAVE GENERATED A GROWING ANTI-AMERICAN FEELING, AND MANY OF THE REFUGEES THERE ARE BLAMING THE LACK OF SUFFICIENT US SUPPORT FOR THE LOSS OF THEIR HOMES.

5. MR-4.

THE FIGHTING IN THE DELTA CONTINUES TO BE MODERATE. IT APPEARS THAT THE NVA STRATEGY IN MR-4 IS TO TIE DOWN THE THREE ARVN DIVISIONS THERE AND PREVENT THEIR DEPLOYMENT TO OTHER REGIONS. NVA/VC UNITS ARE ATTEMPTING TO AVOID MAIN FORCE CONTACT BUT IN ONE ENGAGEMENT NEAR CAY LAY KILLED 62 ENEMY WHILE SUSTAINING ONLY ONE EACH KIA AND WIA.

6. ICCS

AS OF 0800 HOURS MARCH 20, THE ICCS HAD PULLED OUT OF ITS HUE SITE, AND PA&E WAS IN THE PROCESS OF CLOSING THE SITE. THE IRANIANS AND HUNGARIANS HAVE LEFT THE DALAT AND BAO LOC SITES, AND PA&E PLANS TO BEGIN CLOSING THESE SITES MARCH 21.

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PAGE 04 STATE 063367

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